



Fast Fundraising Facts & Other Essentials

WANT TO MAKE HEADLINES?

WANT TO MAKE HEADLINES? MAKE IT NEWSWORTHY

First Rule of Public Relations: You Must Understand the Media's Needs

By Elizabeth Martin

Reporters try to generate news and feature stories that they believe will interest a mass audience. So should you. The mass media reaches a large audience and can, indeed, give your organization a publicity boost that's unequalled. But many newspapers have a rule of thumb limiting feature stories about any group to once a year.

Hard news coverage and coverage of events isn't included in the once-a-year limit. So news is what you should strive to create for the greatest media exposure.

Just because your organization is doing wonderful things, they're not automatically newsworthy. If you didn't have a vested interest in your organization, would you want to read a story in your local paper with this headline? "*Local Children's Services Group Held a Bake Sale at the Community Church last Wednesday and Raised \$75.*"

Packaging can make a big difference in whether your press release intrigues or gets tossed. What you need is to stand out – to be the first, largest or most unusual at something – or to have a heart-tugging human interest story. That's where creativity comes in.

Your most important asset – especially if your budget is limited – is imagination. (A volunteer who's a skilled photographer is a terrific asset, too.)

Here are a couple examples of using creativity to present your story:

A press release on receipt of a \$500 grant might generate media yawns. But if the

grant allows you to introduce the city's first pet therapy program that trains dogs to provide therapy to children with cancer, now that's a story of interest to the community, and especially to the media. But send a picture of a dog with a child, not a picture of the check!

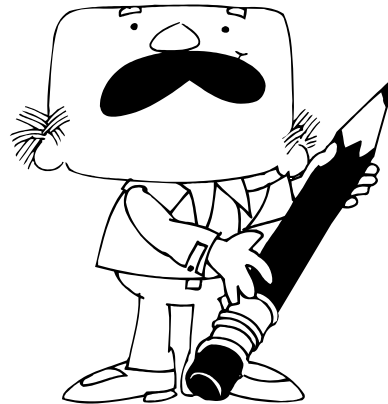
An awards presentation can be good PR with your volunteers but a low-interest story unless you give it an unusual twist. For example, if the mayor or local celebrity hands out certificates, you've added interest. (If Robert Redford hands out the certificates, you'll have to rent a bigger venue!)

If a volunteer has made life better for ten families, maybe the families could create and present a unique certificate. Imagination is the key.

Finally, while imagination can increase your success rate enormously, there are some events that are meaningful to you and your organization alone. They're wonderful. But they're dull to anyone not

intimately involved in the organization...no matter how much creativity you apply. Don't send releases to the media in such cases. Include them in a newsletter if you can. Or just let these stories pass. You want the media to open envelopes with your logo and not automatically pitch them because the editor thinks "This group never sends me anything interesting."

Still can't come up with any ideas to get the media's attention? PR! Success offers newsletters, workshops, and a one-on-one public relations training program developed by seasoned PR pro Elizabeth Martin aimed at enabling organizations to get media attention. Contact Elizabeth at 505-989-1733 or visit www.prsuccess.com.



Choosing the Right Public Relations Tools

Some public relations tools are more appropriately used with your program's clients; some are ideal ways to communicate with your volunteers and underwriters. Some can be effectively used with a variety of target audiences.

The most common pitfall in the practice of public relations is the vain hope that one newspaper story or one all-purpose brochure will create all the public awareness your group will ever need. Communication is an ongoing process, comprised 10% of the big and splashy and 90% of the slow, persistent and consistent broadcasting of a few key points. It's taking every opportunity to seek out potential supporters and tell them why your group's work is important to them and how they can be involved.

When developing your public relations plan, the more specific goals you have the more effective you'll be in taking full advantage of publicity. For example, if your goal is to increase ticket sales to your event by 20%, a big feature story on the event in your local newspaper may or

may not prompt people to purchase. But if you copy the clipping and send it to your "potentials" list with a personal note and a ticket order form, you'll get better results. Once you've defined who you need to talk to and what you want to say, you're in a position to make the best choice of a communications medium.

Finally, it's important to try to accomplish only one objective per promotional message. If you want to increase program use, don't also try to raise funds for your program and recruit volunteers in the same promotional piece. Create separate promotional activities for each distinct target audience and message.

For help in creating PR tools for your nonprofit organization, PR! Success offers workshops and teleconference seminars. The next PR! Success workshop will be held on January 16 in New York City. To register or to find out more about how you can have PR! Success, call 505-989-1733.

More Great PR Ideas from Elizabeth Martin

Here are some useful tools for creating a solid public relations campaign:

A Current, Targeted Media Database with names of reporters, editors, producers, and freelance writers is a must! It's important that your list contains appropriate contacts at newspapers, magazines, Web sites, television, and radio stations.

Mailing Lists are worth their weight in gold if they are broken into constituent categories (that includes supporters, clients, and local politicians) and if you keep them updated.

Newsletters you produce can cover the good news that's interesting to your constituents but not necessarily to the mass media. Your newsletter is the place to recognize volunteers and contributors, announce upcoming activities, and thank the repairman who fixed your office equipment at no charge. Thanking such supporters publicly encourages further support. And it's impressive to potential donors, who often not only want to see that other companies underwrite your activities, but also, that you generate grassroots support.

Brochures are greatly favored by any organization, and they have their uses. But funds should be allocated for a newsletter first because it's an ongoing communication whereas a brochure appears only once. The brochure targets a single message one time. The newsletter allows you to change the message frequently and continuously.

Audio-Visual Presentations of five minutes or less (either

in PowerPoint, slide-show or videotape format) can prove useful in many settings: as part of community service fairs, on fundraising calls, at presentations to clubs and organizations. Always keep duplicates in case of loss or the need to be represented in two places at once.

Speakers Bureaus can bring a representative of your group to speak before clubs, churches, service organizations, and professional groups that might share an interest in the service you provide. Poll your board members and volunteers working in the field to determine their willingness to speak. Then contact groups whose support would be beneficial to your organization to see if a speaker might be scheduled. Follow up on the bookings, keep a list of equipment and power requirements, make sure your speaker is certain of the time, place and directions and ask for feedback after the talk.

Exhibits can be assembled from photographs, clippings, existing audio-visual presentations and memorabilia from your group and used at a variety of public gatherings.

Flyers and Posters can be placed in stores, community centers, libraries and spots with public bulletin boards. Cleverly designed, they can also serve as mailers to patrons.

Certificates and Plaques you give to supporters, special volunteers and helpful officials are likely to be displayed if they're attractive. And they'll further spread your fame... as well as your reputation for practicing good public relations.

Go to page 4 for more Great PR Ideas!

Internet Resources For Nonprofits

Need to know how your salary stacks up against others in the nonprofit sector? Visit www.workforce.com/section/02/article/23/55/06.

Target Funding Group publishes a monthly email newsletter on how to make the most of your charitable fundraising auctions. Go to www.benefitauction.com to sign up for this free newsletter.



Learn all you need to know about internal financial controls at www.delawarenonprofit.org/FinMgmtFaq1.

If you haven't visited Tony Poderis' web site, you should! It is full of great, practical,

useful articles and ideas. Go to www.raise-funds.com and load paper into your printer!

Want to tap into Internet fundraising the easy way? Hold a virtual nonevent and get the help you need at www.NonEvents.com.

Learn about risk management from the pros at the Nonprofit Risk Management Center. They offer a nine-part module that helps give your organization a risk management checkup. Go to www.nonprofitrisk.org/cares/cares. They also offer 4 Pillars of Accountability: ethical fundraising, strategic risk management, cultural competence and fiscal integrity. Read more at www.nonprofitrisk.org/pillars/pillars.

If you know some great Internet sites, please send me an email so I can share them in the next newsletter!

TWO GREAT BOOKS AVAILABLE NOW:

THE ABCs OF BUILDING BETTER BOARDS and FAST FUNDRAISING FACTS FOR FAME & FORTUNE

Now you can add two great books to your agency library. **The ABCs of Building Better Boards** is just what you need to improve your Board's potential. It includes ideas for recruitment, retention and recognition and has some great forms for you to copy and use.

Learn how to deal with unproductive Board members and how to better define the roles of staff and Board. There is a chapter on financial and fiduciary facts, one on simple parliamentary procedure and much, much more.

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Fast Fundraising Facts for Fame & Fortune is full of ideas to improve your fundraising, including how to ask effectively, special events essentials and new ideas for fundraising.

Help volunteers get over the fear of asking for money and in-kind resources for your organization. Learn how marketing principles will make fundraising easier.

Learn about **Jean's Ten Rules for Fundraising Success** and apply them to your organization immediately. This book puts the **FUN** into **FUND**raising and gives good examples and ideas that really work, rather than using hard to follow formulas and theories.

At only \$19.95 plus shipping and handling, it's a Must Have for your fundraising committee members!

Email me at Jean@jblockinc.com to discuss volume discounts for staff or volunteers.

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Working Successfully with the Media

Without knowing it, you probably learned the first rule of successful public relations in kindergarten: ask nicely and always say thank you. Your first contact with the media is likely to be one or more of these written communications suggesting a story for possible coverage.

A personalized pitch letter sent alone or with a press release can point out a specific angle or suggest story ideas or good interview subjects. This shows you've taken the time to consider what might interest that particular reporter. As you work with the media, you will become increasingly aware of the kinds of stories that appeal to various people.

A press release is often the first step to attract attention, but make sure the release is a good one. Keep it to one to two pages, use an active headline, include five or six paragraphs that cover the WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, and WHY. Use quotable quotes, especially by well-known spokespeople.

A calendar listing or news advisory ticks off the WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE and WHY in very concise fashion-- often with times and places underscored or in bold to catch a busy editor's eye. Calendar items, if your meeting or event is open to the public, should give details on the program, place, time and ticket cost (if any) and sent to calendar editors of magazines, newspapers, and radio and television stations.

A press kit may be necessary, if you have several related stories to tell; a number of related events, like a month-long series of speakers or demonstrations; or a new programming season to announce. In addition to a fact sheet and general release, a press kit may contain photos (with captions attached), a calendar of events, biographies of key individuals involved and brochures.

Public Service Announcements (PSAs) are non-paid "commercials" on a nonprofit organization's upcoming event or its on-going services which many television and radio stations will run free-of-charge.

Follow-up phone calls are often helpful in placing stories. A good way to start the conversation is to identify yourself immediately, briefly state your reason for calling and ask if this is a good time to talk. If the reporter says "no," ask when you could call back. Sometimes reporters or editors are relaxed and chatty, but it's still best to be well prepared with what you want to get across and to make it as succinct as possible. Even though you sent a release directly to the individual, the reporter may not have seen it and will ask you to resend it. That's a good sign. Or the reporter may suggest you send it to someone else at the newspaper or station. Making a placement on the first try is terrific (and exhilarating). More often, perseverance and many calls will have to be placed before a firm interview is set. On the other hand, if someone is clearly not interested, it's best to take "no" for an answer. If you push too hard, chances are you'll never place anything with that particular reporter.

Don't be discouraged if you get minimal or no interest in a given story. It is extremely rare for 100 percent of the media to be interested in a story; and even if they're interested, sometimes a reporter just can't be available at the right time. Finally, every PR person's recurring nightmare is that a spectacular fire will erupt 30 minutes before their "good news" event is set to begin. If that happens, kiss the cameras goodbye.

Reporters do file releases for future use. And even if you can't sell your first story, you will have made a valuable media contact and have improved your chances for the next time!

Remember, it never hurts to say a simple "Thank You" for the coverage you receive. You can do this with a short phone call, e-mail, or a nice Letter to the Editor.

Effective public relations are created from a variety of different parts -- from newsletters to news releases, speakers' bureaus to special events. Media relations alone can be an exercise in patience and persistence. But fortunately, such consistent, persistent campaigns accomplish a great deal over time. They can bring credibility to your organization with the general public, local government officials and with special publics you wish to reach. And, if you have received a contribution or grant from a local company, you can probably increase the chances of getting future funds by making sure they get the recognition they deserve. Everyone appreciates a well-deserved pat on the back and publicizing the fact that the company believes in what you're doing may cause other companies to support you, too.

Unlimited funds are wonderful. But, again, your greatest asset (regardless of your budget) is imagination. The more you exercise it, the more creative -- and effective -- you'll be.

PR! Success Tips is an email subscription that provides tips, techniques, and ideas on improving your public relations. If you would like to sign up, visit www.prsuccess.com, click on PR! Success Tips and fill in the form.